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## BRIEF MENTION

*The Mechanism of English Style.* By Lewis Worthington Smith (New York, Oxford University Press, American Branch, 1916). One is perplexed in trying to believe that the author has selected the most fitting title for this book. There is much—too much—in present tendencies of educational experimentation that encourages students to expect easy ‘ways’ of doing hard ‘things.’ A declaration of having reduced a subtle, intellectual, and æsthetic subject to mechanical rules is likely, therefore, to be read into Mr. Smith’s title, and this interpretation will occasion *à priori* a classification of his book with approved cross-cuts in the pursuit of efficiency. But Mr. Smith’s purpose is sound and serious. The mechanical mind will not be flattered by his insistence on a profound understanding of the distinction between the laws of the universal mind and the rules and conventionalities of an art; the mind of the less flexible type will recoil from the injunction to endeavor to develop an individual style by submission to severe and prolonged self-discipline. The disappointment awaiting those who may hope to find in this book a refuge from assiduous effort is analogous to that of a physician’s patient receiving plain and stern advice as to diet, exercise, work, and sleep, in lieu of a prescription of wonder-working potencies. To heal oneself is the meaning of the advice given; and according to the gravity of the disorder will probably be the severity of the effort that is to be made to correct it. The responsibility has been adroitly shifted to the patient. In a corresponding manner, Mr. Smith is primarily bent on commending strict and indefatigable self-discipline. To assist in this matter, he dissects sentences and paragraphs, anatomizes literary wholes, and classifies words and phrases, and he is willing that this be called a mechanical procedure; but the end in view is as organic as personality itself.

If one were to attempt the suggestion of a title descriptive of the purpose of this book, *Originality of Style thru Imitation* would not be wide of the mark. Originality, that is to say, individuality, in the practice of a fine art is to be achieved, and the first steps must be imitative. This fundamental truth is here enforced by analogies that are too commonly not applied to the art of using one’s vernacular, in speech and in literary workmanship; it is also enforced by an appeal to reported experience of authors, especially that of Stevenson, which is the key-note of Mr. Smith’s argument. At places one may be inclined to disapprove a paragraph or two as being a trifle too methodical, too pedagogical in a sense imposed on a good word by the connotations of the so-called science of education. But that is a minor matter in comparison with the

merit of a persistent insistence on creative imitation of good writers as the initial step in learning to write worthily,—with the authentic touch. “Knowing how and getting the touch” is the heading of Mr. Smith’s ninth chapter. It is here that his method is codified, and summarily justified: “We may see how others have done, going over the ground after them, and we may try the doing for ourselves. Practically, if we wish to carry our practice of the literary art, or any other, as far as we can, we should do both. . . . In fact, it seems almost self-evident that the easiest road to achievement in any kind of effort is through acquaintance with the experience of others. There is no doubt a great deal of drudgery in following the details of style in any writer. So there is drudgery in mastering the technique of any art.” But in working thru a variety of styles one comes in time to perform with “an almost instinctive ease” what had once been drudgery. Then will follow the skill of being ourselves “in the written word, saying what we please with what effect we please.”

The method is offered in the form of two series of questions, “meant to aid in the study of the writings that make up the body of the book.” The texts to be thus studied (Part II, pp. 85-284) range from Sir Philip Sidney to James Huneker, with a leap, however, from Sidney to DeQuincey. This exclusion of the eighteenth century writers is the less commendable because of the inclusion of Sidney, whose style is too antiquated for the purpose of the book. Moreover, the century unrepresented in the “texts” is conspicuous in literary history for a speculative interest in the distinction between imitation and originality in composition, and Mr. Smith’s book would be an appropriate place for citations from the essay by the author of *Night Thoughts*, entitled *Conjectures on Original Composition* (now accessible in the *Jahrbuch* of the German Shakespeare Society, vol. xxxix). The essay is confirmative of Mr. Smith’s argument, altho strikingly characteristic of the neo-classical period. ‘To know and reverence oneself’ is after all the prime admonition, and it remains a thought-provoking question to ask, “Born *Originals*, how comes it to pass that we die *Copies*?”

Preceding the chapter in which the method of using the “texts” is compactly presented in the lists of “Study Questions” and “General Questions on Structure” are eight chapters on the subjects of Skill, Style, “Sentences and their Relations,” Associations and Connotations of Words, “The Rhythm of Prose,” “The Living Spirit and the Dress” (Relation between Form and Substance), Usage, and Transformation of Literary Material. As already intimated there is little fault to find with the form and content of this portion of the book. The writing is clear, direct, earnest, and unpretentious; and it is more or less enlivened by unusual allusions and new illustrative matter. The student has only to be willing to be taught to be rewarded here with sound

and lucid instruction in the elementary principles of the art of writing.

The use in the colleges of this book would indicate a change in widely favored methods of teaching English Composition. A conviction is spreading that the time allotted to this subject does not yield commensurate results; and there is impending, one must believe, a bold reconsideration of the place in the curriculum of a course in writing, and the 'place' will determine the character of the course. Mr. Smith's book does not solve the difficulty, but it is helpful in pointing away from the premature and unfruitful theme-writing by which the colleges are distressing the "hordes of freshmen," and of which "the full force and joint result" may, in a cynical mood, be valued merely as the fulfillment of an implied boast,

We bring to one dead level every mind.

Different methods are now employed in the teaching of this subject, but if the average result is of an unsatisfactory character,—and there is not much evidence against this assumption,—the conclusion must be that these are all so much at fault as to warrant a trial of other methods that may all be believed to be chiefly good. The words of a teacher of long ago are applicable to the point. Henry Peacham, in the *Compleat Gentleman*, illustrates his argument thus: "Nor is it my meaning that I would all Masters to be tyed to one Method, no more than all the Shires of England to come up to London by one high way: there be many equally alike good."

J. W. B.

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*The Old Wives' Tale*: a Play, by George Peele, as presented at Middlebury College in 1911. Edited with Notes and an Introduction by Frank W. Cady (Boston, Richard G. Badger; Toronto, The Copp, Clark Co., 1916). The Ghost of Jack, was on the stage, and if the Spirit of Peele was in the pit during the academic presentation of this play, it must have been cheered by an assurance of the stability of refined delight in the fancies of the unsophisticated mind, in the fairies, enchantments, and wonders of a world so frankly accepted in childhood as real and so helpful to the mature mind in symbolizing subtleties of truth. It is inconceivable that this kind of symbolism will ever be banished from the stage. Even in these so-called realistic days it has remounted to a notable degree of public favor. "In its final effect," says Mr. Cady, "Peele has asked us to look again at the world from the point of view of the child, as Barrie has done for this age in *Peter Pan*."

For a critical edition of the text of this play and for scholarly 'apparatus,' in which no aspect of the study hitherto bestowed on it is not admirably summed up and given a forward look toward

further investigations, the student is indebted to Professor Gummere's contribution to Gayley's *Representative English Comedies* (The Macmillan Co., 1903). Mr. Cady supplies something altogether different, namely a modern players' edition, designed primarily, it would seem, for amateurs, altho its use may, conceivably, extend into some 'New Theatre,' for 'semi-professionals' and 'Vagabond Players' might be well employed in trying it. Mr. Cady has, of course, modernized the spelling and by substitutions obviated the use of several needlessly plain words. More minute attention approved a change in the order of the text, the carrying back of lines 728-751 (Gummere's numbering) to insert them after line 650. On the other hand, the chief feature of this edition represents a very liberal share of work that could not have been done without fine dramatic insight and an aptness in suggesting stage-devices. This feature consists in complete stage directions for the reproduction of the play, preferably on a reconstructed or a modified Elizabethan stage (such as is pictured in the frontispiece). These directions are so full, minute, and appropriate that the added value of an analysis of the play with a share of helpful comments will be attributed to them.

In his Introduction, Mr. Cady writes discriminatingly of Peele's use of the induction and of his conformity to "the formula for romantic comedy." He assigns originality to Peele in the "choice of sources for the situations in the play," and for the point of view at which the audience is placed; and he declares the "present human interest which makes worth while a modern presentation" not to lie, probably, "in poetry or characterization," but "rather in the very things in which Peele showed his originality: the perennial child-interest in fairy-tale to which he appealed in his choice of sources, and the perennial interest to an adult in returning to look upon life through the eyes of a child."

An examination of the elements of satire and of humor in the play leads Mr. Cady to conclude that to retain these effects the fairy element must receive the prominent emphasis in any modern presentation, which may follow the method represented in this edition, or it may be, perhaps best of all, "an out-door presentation," or, "next best," a setting "upon a modern picture stage." He discusses details of the academic presentation and defends the "liberties" taken in the way of introducing dances and songs. There is good comment on the rôle of the characters, and a discussion of stage-business that deserves consideration when another attempt may be made to present this play, which has the distinction of being the fore-runner of *Comus*.

J. W. B.

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*Don Diego Juménez de Enciso y su Teatro*, por Emilio Cotarelo y Mori (Madrid, 1914), is an important contribution by this distinguished Spanish scholar to our knowledge of the Spanish drama of the seventeenth century. While a number of eminent critics,

among them Count v. Schack, Latour and Schaeffer have devoted considerable space to the discussion of the comedies of Enciso, this dramatic poet has never, until the appearance of the present work, been subjected to the detailed and intensive study which he so well deserved. In fact, so far as Enciso's life is concerned, all that we are told in the works of the critics just mentioned might be summed up in half a dozen lines. Concerning the ancestors of our poet Sr. Cotarelo mentions one Pedro Jiménez, native of the villa of Enciso, in the province and near the city of Logroño, whom we find in Seville about the middle of the sixteenth century. The poet was the eldest son of the *jurado* Diego Jiménez de Enciso and of his second wife doña Isabel de Zuñiga, and was born in Seville in the parish of Santa Cruz, where he was baptized on August 22, 1585. There were two other children—daughters: doña Ana, “que pasó oscuramente su vida,” and doña Maria, who afterwards married her paternal uncle. A son of this marriage, named Pedro, obtained thru the efforts of our poet the habit of the order of Santiago, afterwards became the Marquis de Casal, and was a personage of much importance in his native city, Seville, of which he was one of the *Veintecuatros*. On the death of his father in 1599, the poet became the possessor of considerable property in Seville, where he resided for many years, being a “principal caballero en aquella gran ciudad, la más bella e importante entonces en España.” He early acquired a reputation as a poet and is mentioned by Lope de Vega in his *Jerusalem conquistada*, written about 1605, and is praised by Cervantes in his *Viage del Parnaso* in 1614. As a dramatic poet Diego Jiménez de Enciso had the rare good fortune of being entirely independent of any pecuniary returns from his plays, for in addition to his inherited wealth he was greatly favored by Philip IV, and by the Count Duke of Olivares, several of his comedies being represented in the royal palace before the King and Queen.

Enciso is the author of ten plays, which are analyzed by Sr. Cotarelo, considerable space being devoted to the three on which his reputation mainly rests: *La mayor Hazaña de Carlos V.*, *Los Medecis de Florencia*, and the most celebrated play of all, *El Príncipe Don Carlos*. The latter, of which there are two versions—one a *refundición* by Cañizares—is discussed at great length. It is certainly strange that this version of Cañizares, which was printed at Valencia in 1773, is the one that has gained the greatest celebrity. Sr. Cotarelo's study is an excellent piece of work, which has greatly enlarged our knowledge of this poet of unquestioned merit, and which will be welcomed by all students of the Spanish drama. It takes its place beside the same scholar's work *Don Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla*, as one of the best monographs in this department of Spanish literature that has appeared in years.